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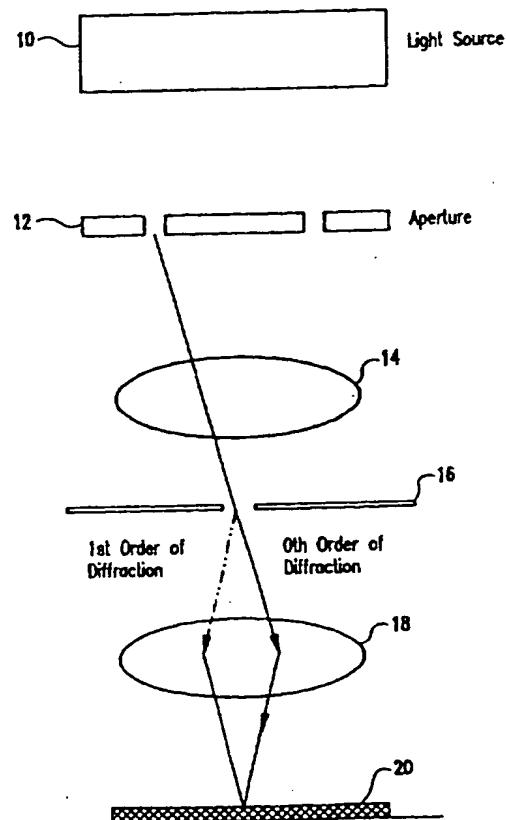
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(54) Title: AVOIDANCE OF PATTERN SHORTENING BY USING AN OFF AXIS ILLUMINATION WITH TWISTING DIPOLE
AND POLARIZING APERTURES

(57) Abstract

A system and method of avoiding pattern shortening without resorting to generating a mask with a bias solve the direction dependent differences in exposure behavior in photolithography processes in the manufacture of semiconductor devices. Instead of designing a biased mask to solve the exposure problem, the pattern shortening effect is avoided by influencing the exposure process itself. By using an off axis illumination technique, the exposure is separated into different directions. In one embodiment, off axis illumination is applied in combination with special dipole apertures (i.e., two openings). The exposure is done in two or more parts, whereby the dipole aperture (12) is rotated between exposures. In another embodiment, off axis illumination is used in combination with special polarizer apertures. As with the first embodiment, the exposure is done in two or more parts, but in this case with differently polarized light.



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AVOIDANCE OF PATTERN SHORTENING
BY USING AN OFF AXIS ILLUMINATION
WITH TWISTING DIPOLE AND
POLARIZING APERTURES

5

DESCRIPTION

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

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Field of the Invention

The present invention generally relates to the manufacture of very large scale integrated (VLSI) circuit devices and, more particularly, to the fidelity enhancement of lithographic images through the use of off axis illumination with optical twisting dipole and polarizing apertures.

Background Description

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Manufacturing of semiconductor devices is dependent upon the accurate replication of computer aided design (CAD) generated patterns onto the surface of a device substrate. The replication process is typically performed using optical lithography followed by a variety of subtractive (etch) and additive (deposition) processes. Optical lithography patterning involves the illumination of a metallic (e.g., chrome) coated quartz plate known as a photomask which contains a magnified image of the computer generated pattern etched into the metallic layer. This illuminated image is reduced in size and patterned into a photosensitive film on the device substrate. As a result of the interference and processing effects which occur during pattern transfer, images formed on the device substrate deviate from their ideal dimensions and shape as represented by the computer images. These deviations depend on the characteristics of

the patterns as well as a variety of process conditions. Because these deviations can significantly effect the performance of the semiconductor device, many approaches have been pursued which focus on CAD compensation schemes 5 which ensure a resultant ideal image.

The performance enhancement of advanced VLSI circuitry (that is, the speed enhancement versus dimension reduction of the circuits) is increasingly limited by the lack of pattern fidelity in a series of 10 lithography and RIE processes at small dimensions (e.g., sub 0.5 μ m). In the photolithography process, a pattern is transferred from a photomask to a photosensitive film (resist) on the wafer. In the RIE process, this pattern in the resist is transferred into a variety of films on 15 the wafer substrate. After lithography, some structures show a so-called pattern shortening effect. This effect is due to the fact that the exposure process is direction dependent. This means that the exposure dose (i.e., exposure time) then has to be optimized for one 20 direction. The other direction cannot be independently optimized. The unfortunate consequence is the above described pattern or line shortening.

An alternative to the costly development of processes with every higher effective resolution is the 25 selective biasing of mask patterns to compensate for the pattern distortions occurring during wafer processing. The term Optical Proximity Correction (OPC) is commonly used to describe this process of selective mask biasing, even though the trend exists to include pattern 30 distortions unrelated to the optical image transfer. The idea of biasing patterns to compensate for image transfer infidelities has been commonly applied to E-beam lithography to counteract the effects of back scattered electrons, both in the writing of photo masks and in 35 direct wafer writing operations. See for example U.S. Patent No. 5,278,421.

OPC extends the use of the automatic pattern biasing concept to the two major pattern transfer processes used in VLSI technologies. Current implementations of OPC can be categorized as "rules-based" in which patterns are

5 sorted and biased in the computer aided design (CAD) data set based on rules relating bias amounts to pattern attributes such as size, proximity, and density, and "convolution-based" in which CAD patterns are biased based on particular pattern environment. Both the rules

10 and convolution functions can be generated either from process simulations or empirical data. For examples of "rules-based" OPC implementations, see Richard C. Henderson and Oberdan W. Otto, "CD data requirements for proximity effect corrections", 14th Annual BACUS

15 Symposium on Photomask Technology and Management, William L. Brodsky and Gilbert V. Shelden, Editors, Proc. SPIE 2322 (1994), pp.218-228, and Oberdan W. Otto, Joseph G. Garofalo, K. K. Low, Chi-Min Yuan, Richard C. Henderson, Christophe Pierrat, Robert L. Kostelak, Shiela Vaidya, and P. K. Vasudev, "Automated optical proximity

20 correction--a rules-based approach", Optical/Laser Microlithography VII, Timothy A. Brunner, Editor, Proc. SPIE 2197 (1994), pp. 278-293. For examples of the "convolution-based" OPC implementations, see John P.

25 Stirnimann and Michael L. Rieger, "Fast proximity correlation with zone sampling", Optical/Laser Microlithography VII, Timothy A. Brunner, Editor, Proc. SPIE 2197 (1994), pp. 294-301, and John Stirnimann and Michael Rieger, "Optimizing proximity correction for

30 wafer fabrication processes", 14th Annual BACUS Symposium on Photomask Technology and Management, William L. Brodsky and Gilbert V. Shelden, Editors, Proc. SPIE 2322 (1994), pp. 239-246. In order to compensate the direction dependent differences in exposure behavior, the

35 associated masks are designed with a certain bias. This bias is such that, for example, the lines are designed slightly longer. There are, however, limitations to this

solution due to the limited resolution of the chrome mask writing system being used.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

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It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a system and method of avoiding pattern shortening without resorting to generating a mask with a bias to solve the direction dependent differences in 10 exposure behavior in photolithography processes.

According to the invention, instead of designing a biased mask to solve the exposure problem, the pattern shortening effect is avoided by influencing the exposure process itself. Currently, all directions are exposed to 15 the light for the same time (i.e., the total exposure time). By using an off axis illumination technique, it is possible to separate the exposure in different directions. More specifically, the problem of pattern shortening is solved according to one embodiment of the 20 invention by applying the off axis illumination technique in combination with special dipole apertures (i.e., two openings). The exposure is done in two or more parts, whereby the aperture is twisted by, say, 90° between two exposures. According to another embodiment of the 25 invention, the off axis illumination technique is used in combination with special polarizer apertures. As with the first embodiment, the exposure is done in two or more parts, but in this case with differently polarized light.

30

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The foregoing and other objects, aspects and advantages will be better understood from the following detailed description of a preferred embodiment of the 35 invention with reference to the drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a schematic diagram showing the arrangement of an off axis illumination photolithography

system as used in the practice of the invention according to a first embodiment;

Figures 2A and 2B are plan views of standard apertures used in conventional off axis illumination
5 photolithography systems;

Figures 3A and 3B are plan views of twisting dipole apertures used in the off axis illumination photolithography system of Figure 1 according to a first embodiment of the invention;

10 Figure 4 is a schematic diagram showing the arrangement of an off axis illumination photolithography system as used in the practice of the invention according to a second embodiment; and

15 Figures 5A and 5B are plan views of polarizing apertures used in the off axis illumination photolithography system of Figure 1 according to a second embodiment of the invention.

20 **DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED
EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION**

Referring now to the drawings, and more particularly to Figure 1, there is shown a schematic diagram of an off axis illumination photolithography system. A light source
25 10 illuminates an aperture plate 12. Light passing through the aperture plate 12 is focused by lens system 14 onto a mask 16 having small dimensions relative to the wavelength of the illuminating light such as to produce a diffraction pattern. The mask 16 is typically an etched
30 chrome pattern on quartz. The 0th and 1st order diffraction components of the light passed by the mask 16 is, in turn, focused by lens system 18 onto a target 20, such as a substrate coated with a photosensitive film.

35 The aperture plate 12 in a conventional off axis illumination photolithographic system typically takes the form of the aperture plates shown in Figures 2A and 2B. The aperture plate in Figure 2A is characterized by four

off-center circular apertures located 90° apart about the center of the aperture plate. The aperture plate in Figure 2B is characterized by four pie-shaped holes with the center section occluded. Using either of these 5 aperture plates in an off-axis illumination photolithographic system such as shown in Figure 1 limits the control of the illumination. That is, the exposure process is direction dependent, and it is only possible to optimize the exposure dose (i.e., exposure time) for 10 only one direction.

According to the invention, the exposure process is separated into two directions, allowing for optimization of the exposure dose in each of the two directions. In the first embodiment of the invention, aperture plates as 15 shown in Figures 3A and 3B are used. These plates are characterized by having apertures only along one axis (i.e., diameter), the apertures along the perpendicular axis as shown in Figures 2A and 2B, respectively, being eliminated. The aperture plates shown in Figures 3A and 20 3B are referred to herein as a dipole aperture plate. By using these dipole aperture plates, it is now possible to expose one direction for a different time than another. For example, one direction could be exposed for 40% and the perpendicular direction for 60% of the total exposure 25 time. These different exposure directions can be separated by twisting the dipole aperture plate by 90° between each of the two exposure doses.

It is also possible to separate the exposure dose into more than two directions. This can be done, for 30 example, by twisting the aperture dipole less than 90° between each dose. In addition, the aperture dipole plate can be rotated with a nonconstant angular velocity tailored to the desired dose compensation.

According to a second embodiment of the invention, 35 similar dose compensation can be accomplished using polarizers, as generally shown in Figures 4 and 5A and 5B. In Figure 4, the structure shown is generally the

same as that shown in Figure 1 and like reference numerals designate the same or similar elements. A polarizer 22 is added between the light source 10 and the aperture plate 12. The aperture plate 12 takes the form 5 of one of the aperture plates shown in Figures 5A or 5B. These aperture plates are similar to the aperture plates shown in Figures 2A and 2B except that the apertures are filled with polarizing films. The polarizations of the films in the apertures on one axis are perpendicular to 10 the polarizations of the films in the apertures on the perpendicular axis.

Using the arrangement shown in Figures 4 and 5A or 5B, it is again possible to expose one direction for a different time than another. These different exposure 15 directions are separate by applying the two exposure steps with two differently polarized lights. As in the first embodiment, it is also possible to separate the exposure into more than two directions using similar techniques.

20 While the invention has been described in terms of two preferred embodiments, those skilled in the art will recognize that the invention can be practiced with modification within the spirit and scope of the appended claims.

25

CLAIMS

Having thus described our invention, what we claim is new and desire to secure by Letters Patent is as follows:

1. An off axis illumination system for photolithographic exposure of a photosensitive film on a device substrate in the manufacture of semiconductor devices comprising:
 - 10 a source of light for exposing the photosensitive film;
 - 15 a photomask which contains a magnified image of pattern etched into a metallic layer, said photomask being interposed between the source of light and the photosensitive film to be exposed;
 - 20 a lens system between the photomask and the resist for reducing the size of an illuminated image for patterning into the photosensitive film on the device substrate; and
 - 25 an aperture plate positioned between the source of light and the photomask, said aperture plate allowing the off axis exposure of the photosensitive film to be separated into two or more exposures, each exposure being separately optimized to avoid pattern shortening in a projected image of the photomask on the photosensitive film.
2. The off axis illumination system for photolithographic exposure of a photosensitive film on a device substrate in the manufacture of semiconductor devices as recited in claim 1 wherein said aperture plate is a dipole aperture plate having two off center apertures on a common axis, said aperture plate being rotated between exposure doses to separate the exposure of the photosensitive film into 35 two or more exposures.

3. The off axis illumination system for photolithographic exposure of a photosensitive film on a device substrate in the manufacture of semiconductor devices as recited in claim 2 wherein said aperture plate is characterized by
5 two circular off center apertures.

4. The off axis illumination system for photolithographic exposure of a photosensitive film on a device substrate in the manufacture of semiconductor devices as recited in
10 claim 2 wherein said aperture plate is characterized by two generally pie shaped off center apertures.

15 5. The off axis illumination system for photolithographic exposure of a photosensitive film on a device substrate in the manufacture of semiconductor devices as recited in
claim 1 further comprising a polarizer interposed between
said source of light and said aperture plate, said
aperture plate having apertures filled with polarizing
film, said aperture plate being rotated between exposure
20 doses to separate the exposure of the photosensitive film
into two or more exposures.

25 6. The off axis illumination system for photolithographic exposure of a photosensitive film on a device substrate in the manufacture of semiconductor devices as recited in
claim 5 wherein said aperture plate is characterized by
off center apertures on two mutually perpendicular axes,
polarizations of films of said apertures on said two axes
being mutually perpendicular.

30 7. A method of avoiding pattern shortening in an off axis illumination system for photolithographic exposure of a photosensitive film on a device substrate in the manufacture of semiconductor devices comprising the steps
35 of:
providing a source of light for exposing the
photosensitive film;

interposing a photomask which contains a magnified image of pattern etched into a metallic layer between the source of light and the photosensitive film to be exposed;

5 reducing the size of an illuminated image for patterning into the photosensitive film on the device substrate;

positioning an aperture plate between the source of light and the photomask; and

10 separating the off axis exposure of the photosensitive film into two or more exposures by rotating the aperture plate between exposures, each exposure being separately optimized to avoid pattern shortening in a projected image of the photomask on the

15 photosensitive film.

8. The method of avoiding pattern shortening in an off axis illumination system for photolithographic exposure of a photosensitive film on a device substrate in the

20 manufacture of semiconductor devices as recited in claim 7 wherein the aperture plate is a dipole aperture plate having two off center apertures on a common axis, said aperture plate being rotated between exposure doses to separate the exposure of the photosensitive film into two

25 or more exposures.

9. The method of avoiding pattern shortening in an off axis illumination system for photolithographic exposure of a photosensitive film on a device substrate in the

30 manufacture of semiconductor devices as recited in claim 7 further comprising the step of interposing a polarizer between said source of light and said aperture plate, said aperture plate having apertures filled with polarizing film, said aperture plate being rotated

35 between exposure doses to separate the exposure of the photosensitive film into two or more exposures.

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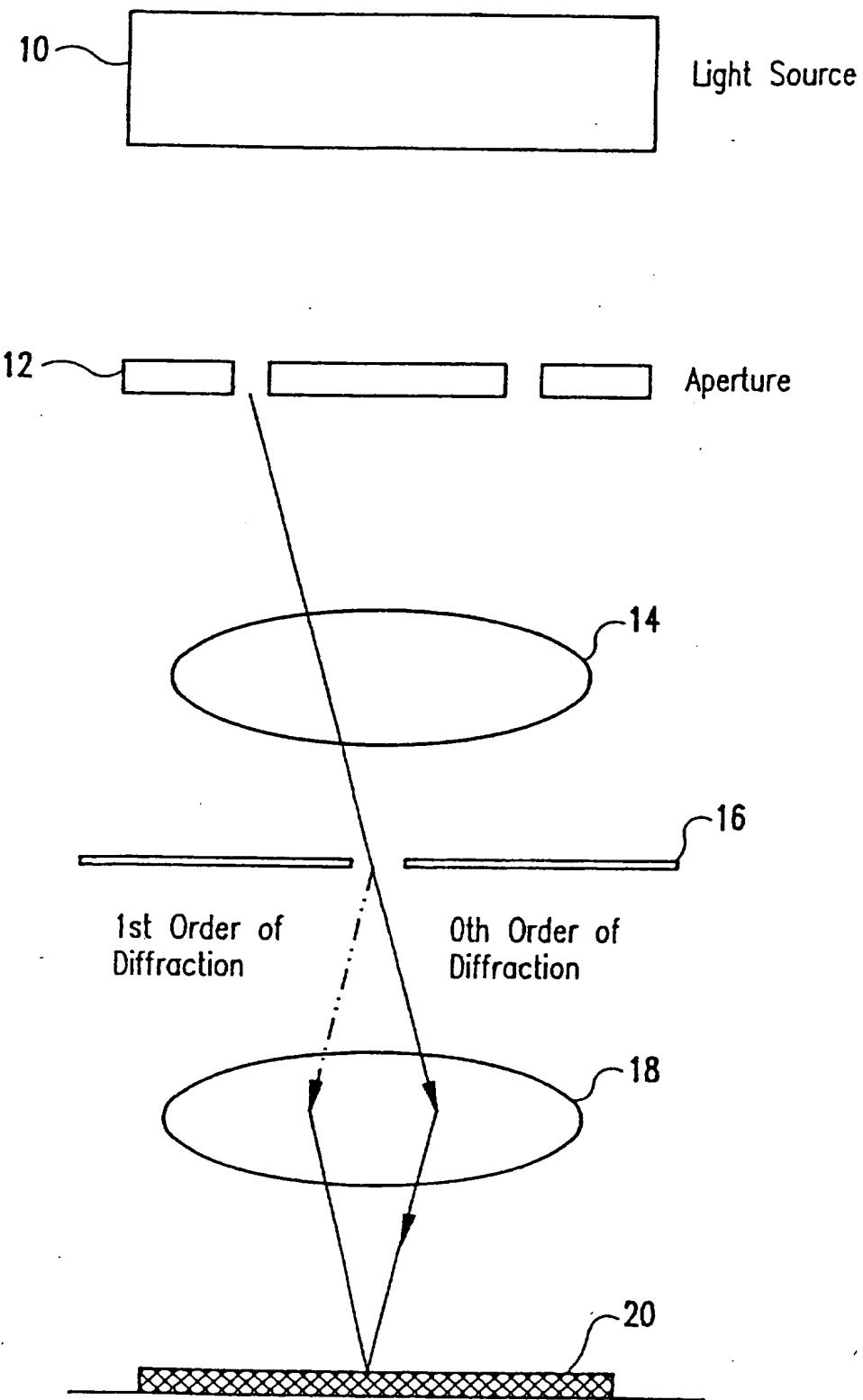


FIG.1

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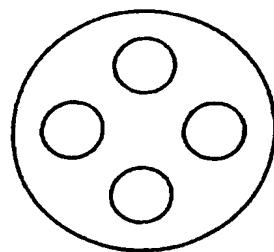


FIG.2A
PRIOR ART

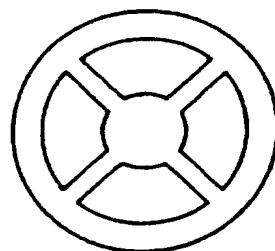


FIG.2B
PRIOR ART

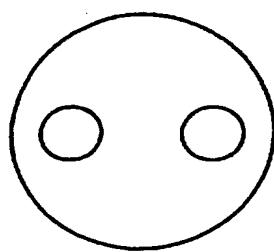


FIG.3A

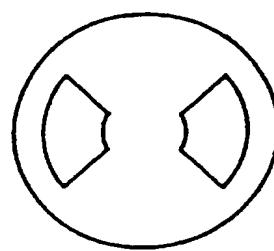


FIG.3B

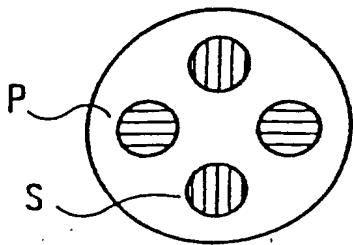


FIG.5A

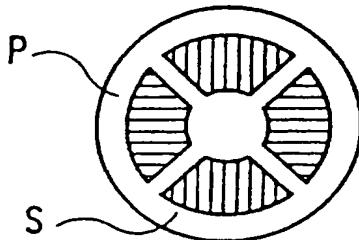


FIG.5B

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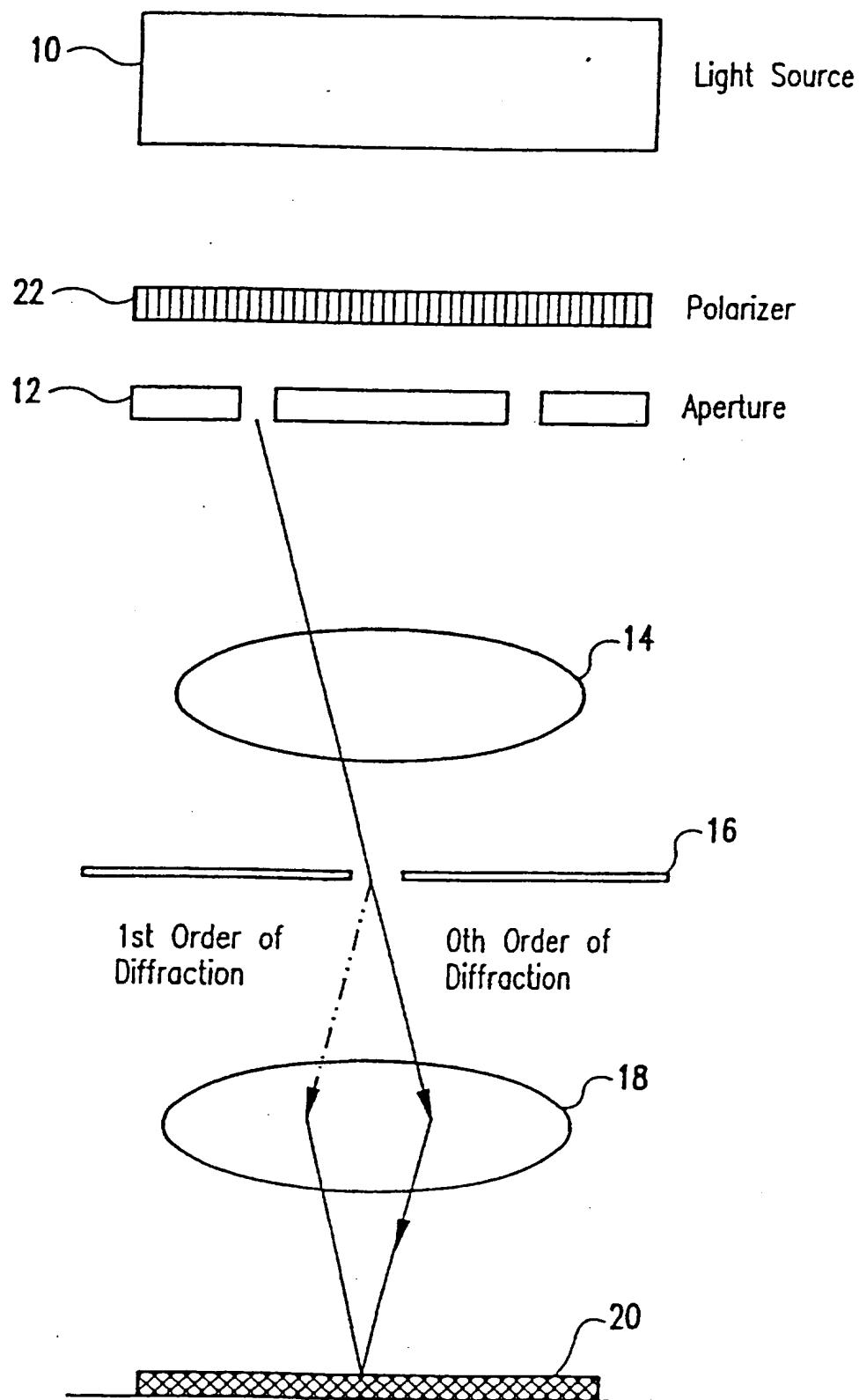


FIG.4

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/IB 96/00971

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 6 G03F7/20

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 6 G03F

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	EP 0 573 281 A (FUJITSU LTD) 8 December 1993 see page 17, line 20 - line 46; figures 35,36,44 see page 23, line 25 - page 24, line 39; figures 59-62	1-5
A	---	6,7
A	JP 06 252 021 A (NEC CORP) 9 September 1994 see figures 7,8 & US 5 476 736 A (TANABE HIROYOSHI) 19 December 1995 see column 5, line 15 - line 32; figures 3,5 -----	4

Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

Patent family members are listed in annex.

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		JP-A-	5335213	17-12-93
		JP-A-	5335214	17-12-93
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		US-A-	5465220	07-11-95
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